Mutual Mutterings

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A Lawyer's Last Will

I, CHARLES LOUNSBERRY, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, do hereby make and publish this, my last will and testament, in order, as justly may be, to distribute my interest in the world among those succeeding me:

That part of my interest which is known in law and recognized in the sheep bound volumes as my property, being inconsiderable and of no account, I make no distribution of this in my will. My right to live, being but a life estate, is not at my disposal, but these things excepted, all else in the world I now proceed to devise and bequeath.

ITEM: I give to good fathers and mothers, in trust for their children, all good little words of praise and encouragement and all quaint pet names and endearments and I charge said parents to use them justly, but generously, as the needs of their children shall require.

ITEM: I leave to children inclusively, but only for the term of their childhood, all and every flower of the field and blossoms of the woods, with the right to play among them freely, according to the customs of children, warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns. And I devise to children the banks of the brooks and the golden sands beneath the waters therein, and the white clouds that float high over the giant trees.

And I leave the children the long, long days to be merry in a thousand ways, and the night and the train of the Milky Way to wonder at, but subject, nevertheless, to the rights hereinafter given to lovers.

ITEM: I devise to boys, jointly, all the useful idle fields, all pleasant waters where one may swim, all snow-clad hills where one may coast, all streams and ponds where one may fish, or where, when grim Winter comes, one may skate, to hold the same for the period of their boyhood, and all meadows with clover blossoms and butterflies, thereof; the woods with their appurtenances, the squirrels and the birds, the echoes and strange noises and all distant places which may be visitant, together with the advantages there found. And I give to said boys, each his own place at the fireside at night, with all pictures that may be seen in the burning wood, to enjoy without let or hindrance, and without any incumbrance or care.

ITEM: To lovers I devise their imaginary world, with whatever they may need, as the stars of the sky, the red roses by the wall, the bloom of the hawthorne, the sweet strains of music and aught else that they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love.

ITEM: To young men, jointly, I devise and bequeath all boistrous and inspiring sports of rivalry, and I give them the disdain of weakness and undaunted confidence in their own strength. Though they are rude, I leave them the power to make lasting friendships, and of possessing companions, and to them, exclusively, I give all merry songs and grave choruses to sing with lusty voices.

ITEM: And to those who are no longer children or youths or lovers, I leave memory, and bequeath to them the volumes of the poems of Burns, and Shakespeare, and of other poets, if there be others, to the end that they may live the old days over again, freely and fully, without tithe or diminuation.

ITEM: To our loved ones with snowy crowns, I bequeath the happiness of old age, the love and gratitude of their children, until they fall asleep.

This strange will was left by a young lawyer who died several years ago in the ward for the insane in the Almshouse of Cook County, Illinois. The will was found in his coat. On a resolution of the Chicago Bar Association the document was sent to probate and so was spread on the records of Cook County.